

E 241

.K5 L3











PRICE, 15 CENTS.

HISTORICAL SKETCH  
OF  
THE BATTLE OF KING'S MOUNTAIN,  
FOUGHT BETWEEN THE  
American and British Troops,  
AT  
KING'S MOUNTAIN, YORK Co., S. C.,  
OCTOBER 7, 1780.

BY REV. ROBERT LATHAN, OF YORKVILLE, S. C.

---

YORKVILLE, S. C.  
PRINTED AT THE OFFICE OF THE ENQUIRER.  
1880.

One dozen copies, \$1.50. Fifty copies, \$5. One hundred copies, \$9.





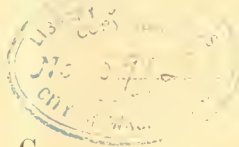
HISTORICAL SKETCH  
OF  
THE BATTLE OF KING'S MOUNTAIN,  
FOUGHT BETWEEN THE  
American and British Troops,  
AT  
KING'S MOUNTAIN, YORK Co., S. C.,  
OCTOBER 7, 1780.

By REV. ROBERT LATHAN, OF YORKVILLE, S. C.

---

YORKVILLE, S. C.

PRINTED AT THE OFFICE OF THE ENQUIRER.  
1880.



Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1880,

By ROBERT LATHAN AND L. M. GRIST,

In the office of the Librarian of Congress, at Washington, D. C.

E24  
363-3

# BATTLE OF KING'S MOUNTAIN.

“O heaven,” they said, “our bleeding country save  
Is there no hand on high to shield the brave ?  
What though destruction sweep these lovely plains !  
Rise fellow men ! Our country yet remains :  
By that dread name we wave the sword on high,  
And swear for her to live ; for her to die.”

CAMPBELL'S PLEASURE OF HOPE.

THE year seventeen hundred and eighty was the darkest period in the Revolutionary struggle. From the mountains to the seaboard, a gloom rested upon the whole country. For five years the colonies, against fearful odds, had been battling for freedom. The country was overrun, its treasury was empty, and its soldiers were hungry and naked. From the hills of Massachusetts to the savannas of Georgia, a darkness that could be both seen and felt, enveloped the land. This was especially the case in South Carolina and Georgia. From the repulse of Sir Peter Parker, on the 28th of June, 1776, until the autumn of 1779, South Carolina, although in open and determined rebellion against the mother country, enjoyed comparative peace. Supplies of arms and munitions of war, together with food and clothing for the army, were landed by different nations of Europe at Charleston. From this point, these army stores, together with rice and other products of the fields of South Carolina, were transported, by wagon trains, as far north as New Jersey. During this period, South Carolina grew and flourished, notwithstanding the existence of war.

In the autumn of 1778, the scene began to change. Col. Campbell was sent from New York, by Sir Henry Clinton, to reduce Savannah, the capital of Georgia. On the 29th of December, Gen. Howe was forced to capitulate. Georgia fell into the hands of the enemy, and South Carolina now became a border State, exposed to the active military operations of the enemy. A bloody struggle was made, near a year afterward, for the recovery of Savannah, but it proved unsuccessful. It soon became evident that the British were determined to capture Charleston. Prevost, in May, 1779, had attempted to take the city by siege, but his plans were frustrated by the adroitness of Gov. Rutledge and the military prowess of General Moultrie.

On the 26th of December, 1779, Sir Henry Clinton, with the

larger part of his army, sailed from New York for the South. In January of the following year, he landed on the coast of Georgia. He had but one object in view, and that was to crush the rebellion in all the Southern colonies. His purpose was to begin at the southern extremity and go northward, leaving the country in his rear in complete and absolute, if not willing, submission to the British government. The first thing to be done to effect his purpose, was the reduction of Charleston. On the 10th of February, he set out from Savannah to accomplish the cherished purpose of his heart. He was successful. Whether all was done that could have been done to save the city, or not, we shall not here inquire. Perhaps it would have been wise, under the existing circumstances, not to have attempted its defense. The attempt, however, was made. Sir Henry Clinton commenced and carried on the siege with as much respect to the rules of military science, as if he had been conducting the siege of an old walled town. Reduced almost to starvation, and poorly provided for every way to stand a siege, the defenders of the city, after a close siege of nearly eight weeks, capitulated on the 12th of May, 1780. The terms of the surrender were hard, and the conduct of the British commander afterward, was calculated to cast a gloom over the patriots. The civil government of Britain was established in the city, and plans were laid for establishing it over the whole State. Everything was done that could be done, to encourage the tories and loyalists and dishearten the patriots..

Early in June, Clinton and the fleet sailed for New York, leaving Lord Cornwallis to complete the establishing of civil government in the State. He commenced his march northward. Parties were sent out in all directions to disperse the patriots and gather up the tories and loyalists with which to swell his ranks. This was not enough. He determined to force those who, from the results of the war, were resting quietly at home, to take up arms against their friends and against the cause which they loved. Lord Cornwallis soon found that the country still remained, and there were many who had sworn for it to live and for it to die. In South Carolina, there was not then a regularly organized American army. There were small parties of men, in almost every section of the State, who disputed every inch of ground with Cornwallis. Still he pushed on. Tories and loyalists flocked to his standard, and many who, heretofore, had been regarded as good Whigs, sought British protection. The country was full of tories and British. Property was destroyed, old men and children were abused and cursed, and women insulted. Many, in despondency, gave up the cause as hopeless. Calamity after

calamity fell upon the afflicted country. On the 16th of August, General Gates, the hero of Saratoga, was defeated and his army routed near Camden. Two days after, the brave Sumter was surprised at Fishing Creek, by Tarleton, and his command scattered.

Such was the general condition of things in South Carolina and Georgia. Many brave men had hidden themselves beyond the mountains, that, like Alfred of old, they might emerge from these mountain fastnesses and rout the invading foe. These voluntary exiles received a welcome from the patriots of Watauga and Nollichucky. There they met Isaac Shelby and John Sevier. Amongst those refugees was Colonel Clarke, of Georgia, with about one hundred of his overpowered, but not subdued men. These refugees told the tales of suffering which they had seen in the States of Georgia and South Carolina. Their stories aroused the patriotism and stirred the spirits of the hardy pioneers of the forest.

After the defeat of Gates at Camden, Cornwallis, as had been done by his predecessor, Clinton, proceeded at once to establish civil government in the upper section of the State. Tarleton and Ferguson were ordered to scour the State. The object was to beat up the tories and loyalists and disperse the Whigs. Ferguson, with about one thousand loyalists and one hundred and ten regulars, had been in the Ninety-Six District for some time, and portions of his command had been, on several occasions, badly cut up by the Whigs. Patrick Ferguson was a Major in the British army, and Brigadier General of the Royal Militia of South Carolina. The second officer in his command was Captain DePeyster, a loyalist. The Whig colonels, McDowell, Sevier, Shelby, Williams and Clarke, were known to frequent this section of the State. The fact that small detachments of tories had been attacked and routed by the bold partisans, greatly incensed the British officer. Meetings of the tories and loyalists were held throughout the Ninety-Six District. Those who claimed to be tories or loyalists, were threatened with severe punishment if they did not take up arms and assist his majesty's troops in putting down the rebellion. Ferguson now found that the rebellion, which Clinton and his successor, Cornwallis, thought was crushed out, was stalking over the land like a giant. Whigs, tories and loyalists, found that each party was in earnest, and a desperate effort must be made, or all would be lost.

On the 18th of August—the day on which Sumter was surprised by Tarleton at Fishing Creek—Col. McDowell was encamped at Smith's Ford on Broad River. He had learned that a party of tories, near five hundred in number, were encamped at Mus-

grove's Mill, on the south side of Enoree River. Colonels Williams, Shelby and Clarke, were detached for the purpose of surprising them. It was a dangerous undertaking, for Ferguson was encamped, with his whole force, midway between McDowell and the Tories. At sun set, the party moved, and by taking a right hand road, passed Ferguson's camp in safety. The Tories were commanded by Col. Innis and Major Frazer. Shelby, Williams and Clarke, arrived at the Tory camp just at day-light. The attack was made, and although the Tories had been reinforced by six hundred regulars under Innis, a complete victory was gained. Flushed with victory, the conquerors determined to make an attack upon Ninety-Six. Just at this moment a courier arrived, bringing the sad news that General Gates had been defeated on the 16th at Camden. They were urged by McDowell to make no delay, lest they should be captured by Ferguson. They had more than two hundred prisoners. The men were tired, and so were their horses. The prisoners were divided out amongst the men, giving every three men two prisoners. After they were completely out of the reach of Ferguson, Shelby went home, leaving Clarke and Williams in charge of the prisoners. Col. Clarke having accompanied Col. Williams for a short distance after the departure of Shelby, took his command and returned home, leaving Col. Williams in charge of the prisoners, by whom they were taken to Hillsborough, North Carolina. Governor Rutledge, of South Carolina, who, at this time, was in Hillsborough, seeing Williams in charge of so many prisoners and supposing that he had been the principal actor in the affair, immediately gave him a Brigadier General's commission as a reward for his supposed brave and heroic exploit.

McDowell, so soon as he heard that Gates was defeated, broke up his camp at Smith's Ford and marched for the mountains. His command was scattered. Some of his men went home, whilst others accompanied their commander beyond the mountains. Ferguson was left in full possession of the field. The Whigs were plundered of their property and driven from their homes. Many of them were forced to hide out in unfrequented spots, whilst not a few were caught and cruelly murdered. The brave and enterprising British officer pushed his way as far as Gilbert Town, near the present site of Rutherfordton, in North Carolina. South Carolina was now under the paw of the British lion. Some crouched and begged for quarter; but there were a few noble spirits—enough to save the country—who had sworn for their country to live, and for her to die. Ferguson was not ignorant of this fact. He knew the history of those men who were beyond



the mountains. He knew that their ancestors, for more than two hundred years, had been fighting for freedom, and he saw that the wilds of America had strengthened the love of liberty in their children. He knew that they were Scotch-Irish and Huguenots by descent. He knew that they could be crushed into the earth, that they could be torn limb from limb, that they could be buried beneath the earth, but he feared their very dust.

He had his spies in the mountain country, and from them he had learned what was going on in the valleys of Nollichucky and Watauga. These spies often brought him the startling news that their fellows were caught and hanged, while others were tarred and suffered to return as a taunt to their champion leader. Ferguson raged. He cursed the rebels for their daring, and he cursed the tories and loyalists for their want of courage.

While Colonel Ferguson lay at Gilbert Town, he paroled Samuel Phillips, a patriot, whom he held as a prisoner, and sent him with a threatening message to the back mountain men. The purport of this message was, that if these patriots in Watauga and Nollichucky did not lay down their arms and submit to the King of England, he would come over the mountain and hang the last one of them. This was not a mere boast. He contemplated doing what he said. Ferguson was no idle boaster. No sooner had Samuel Phillips delivered his message, than the horrors of past generations loomed up before the eyes of the patriots of Watauga and Nollichucky. The blood of John Sevier and Isaac Shelby was stirred. Sevier was eloquent under the impulse of a holy resentment, and the brow of Shelby was knit with indignation, and his whole countenance indicated stern defiance. These noble men at once concluded that they would thwart Ferguson in his bloody purpose, and if there was any hanging to be done, they would do it.

The plan for raising a sufficient number of men to accomplish their purpose was soon devised. To Sevier was assigned the duty of communicating with McDowell and the other officers who were then in voluntary exile beyond the mountains. Shelby assumed, as his part of the work, the writing of a letter to Col. William Campbell, of Washington county, Virginia. The letter was written. The threat of Ferguson was stated, and the plan for his destruction revealed. In this letter Campbell was earnestly requested to coöperate. This letter was placed in the hands of Moses Shelby, a brother of Isaac, and duly delivered. Colonel Campbell declined to render his assistance, stating that his intentions were to assist in preventing Cornwallis from reaching Virginia. This message was returned by Moses Shelby. Colonel

Shelby immediately wrote another letter to Col. Campbell, in which he urged him, more strongly, to lend his assistance. Although Campbell was as firm and unyielding as a mountain, still he was not blind to reason or deaf to the calls of duty. He sent Shelby word that he would come and bring his whole command. This was more than was expected. The place of general rendezvous was Sycamore Shoal, on the Watanga; the time, the twenty-fifth of September.

At the appointed time, the entire inhabitants of the back mountain region assembled at Sycamore Shoal, and Campbell, with his Virginians, was there. Everybody was in earnest. There were no gay uniforms; no costly plumes; no long trains of baggage wagons; no ambulances; no surgeon; no chaplain. Officers and men were clad in suits made by their wives, mothers and sisters, and each man intended for the expedition was armed with a faithful Deckhard rifle.\*

All assembled; but all dare not leave the settlement. The Cherokee Indians were on the borders, watching an opportunity to descend with the torch and tomahawk upon the neighborhood. On the morning of the 26th of September, preparations were made for the advance. To victory or to death, was the feeling of every breast. They were rough men externally, but they had brave and tender hearts. Charles McDowell moved amongst the multitude with all the grace and ease of nobility. John Sevier was full of impulse and an energy which never tired. Isaac Shelby had little to say. His knit brow meant speedy action. William Campbell showed, by his stern dignity, that he was born to be free. The officers proposed, before they set out, that the company be called together and the divine blessing be asked. A prayer, solemn and appropriate, being offered up, the party designed for the expedition mounted their horses, and the rest returned to their homes. With anxious hearts did these wait until the result was heard.

The troops left Sycamore Shoal on the twenty-sixth. They were all mounted and unencumbered by baggage of any kind whatever. They expected to support themselves, on the way, by their rifles, or by forcing the Tories to feed them and their horses. The force consisted of one thousand and forty men, as follows: From Burke and Rutherford counties, North Carolina, Col. McDowell, 160 men. From Washington county, North Carolina, (now Ten-

---

\* In its day, the Deckhard rifle was as famous as is the Enfield rifle of the present time. It was made in Lancaster county, Pennsylvania, and bore the name of its maker. The barrel was three feet and six inches long, and carried a ball which weighed about one fourth of an ounce. The gun usually weighed about seven pounds, was trained with great care, and in the hand of a frontiersman, was a deadly weapon.



nessee) Col. John Sevier, 240 men. From Sullivan county, North Carolina, (now Tennessee) Col. Isaac Shelby, 240 men. From Washington county, Virginia, Col. William Campbell, 400 men.

The Sycamore Shoal is near the head of the Watauga. From this point, they pursued nearly an eastern direction, across the Yellow Mountain; afterward their course was nearly south. The first night they spent at Matthew Tolbot's mill. The second day, two of their men deserted and went ahead to the enemy. On the 30th of September they reached the foot of the mountain on the east side. Here they were joined by three hundred and fifty men from Wilkes and Surry counties, under the command of Colonel Benjamin Cleveland and Major Joseph Winston. Cleveland and Winston were keeping themselves concealed that they might join in with any party going against the enemy. The first of October—the second day after the junction with Cleveland—was so wet that it was thought advisable not to move. Ferguson was thought to be at Gilbert Town, and as the guns in those days were all flint and steel locks, it was indiscreet to approach an enemy with wet guns.

Up to this time there was no commanding officer. Shelby perceived that there was a great defect in their organization, and, during the rain, called a council of the officers. They were now in Col. Charles McDowell's region, and advancing against an enemy with which he had lately been contending. He was, moreover, the senior officer, and it was natural that he would be expected to take the command of the whole. No one doubted Charles McDowell's patriotism or bravery; but it was thought that he was not the man to command a partisan corps on an enterprise like that in which they were at that time engaged. Shelby proposed William Campbell as commander-in-chief for the present, and that a messenger be sent to headquarters, wherever that might be, for a commanding officer, who should take charge of the whole corps. This proposition was readily assented to by all, and Col. Chas. McDowell volunteered to go to headquarters after a general officer, and his brother, Joseph McDowell, took command of his men until he would return.

Here, for a time, let us leave these patriotic mountain men, until we can bring up the other forces who were prominent actors in the battle of King's Mountain. After Sumter's defeat at Fishing Creek, on the 18th of August, he and Col. Edward Lacy, with a small portion of Sumter's command, passed over into Mecklenburg, North Carolina. They camped on Clem's Branch. Lacy was sent by Sumter into York and Chester counties, to gather up the Irish of that region, who were known to be true Whigs,

and also to collect all that he could of Sumter's army that was scattered at Fishing Creek.

After Lacy's return to Sumter's encampment, on Clem's Branch, Col. James Williams, who, as we have seen, was made a Brigadier-General by Governor Rutledge shortly after the battle of Musgrove's Mill, arrived in camp, and having shown his commission, claimed the authority to take command of all the South Carolina troops in that section. On the 8th of September, Williams had been ordered, or rather "requested," by Abner Nash, Governor of North Carolina, "to go into Caswell county and such other counties as he might think proper, and raise a body of volunteer horsemen, not to exceed one hundred." With these and a few other troops, Williams came to Sumter's camp, on Clem's Branch. The South Carolina soldiers of Sumter's command positively refused to submit to Williams as a general. They preferred Sumter. The main objection that the soldiers had against Williams was, that having at one time been the commissary of Sumter's command, he had acted in some way or other so as to gain the ill will and even the hatred of many of the men. What the facts in the case were, it is impossible, at this late date, to learn with sufficient accuracy to warrant us in saying who was to blame, Williams or the men. No doubt, both were, to some extent, in the fault. Be this as it may, a difficulty sprung up between Sumter and Williams, and but for the presence of the enemy, it might have ended in something serious.

Whilst the difficulty was pending, it was learned that Rawdon and Tarleton, with a large force, were making preparations for attacking them. It was concluded by both parties, that they would cross the Catawba River at Bigger's Ferry (now Wright's.) Having crossed the river, a council of officers was called to settle the difficulty. Col. William Hill, who was wounded at the battle of Hanging Rock, was made chairman of this council. Whilst the council was discussing the matter, Rawdon and Tarleton appeared on the opposite bank of the river, and commenced firing at them across the river. It was evident that the enemy would not allow them time to look into the matter, and their existence depended upon perfect harmony among themselves. It was agreed to refer the whole matter, with all the facts in the case, to Governor Rutledge, then at Hillsborough, North Carolina. In the meantime, however, Sumter was to retire from the army until the decision of Rutledge was heard. Williams would remain in command of his North Carolina troops, and Colonels Hill and Lacy would take command of the South Carolina troops.

Colonels Winn, Middleton, Thomas and Hampton, were sent

as commissioners to Governor Rutledge; and Lacy and Hill, in the hope of forming a junction with General William Davidson, led the army up the Catawba, and crossed at Tuckaseege Ford. Governor Nash, of North Carolina, had instructed Colonel Williams (then General) to proceed in any direction and operate against the enemy. His instructions were very general, leaving the whole matter to the discretion of Williams himself. While the army, consisting of about four hundred and fifty men, then under the command of Hill, Lacy and Williams, were on the east side of Catawba River, in the neighborhood of Tuckaseege Ford, Williams' scouts brought the information that a body of back-mountain men were already on the east side of the mountain, on their way to fight Ferguson. They immediately crossed the Catawba, at Beattie's Ford, with the intention of going in pursuit of Ferguson. Here they were joined by Majors Graham and Hambright, with about seventy-five men, and not long afterwards by Colonels Hammond and Roebuck, and Majors Chronicle and Hawthorne, with about sixty men.

Williams had his scouts out watching Ferguson. He was the more prompt in doing this, from the fact that his home was on Little River, in what is now Laurens county. This territory was embraced in Ferguson's field of operations. A consultation was held by Williams, Hill, Lacy, Roebuck, Graham, Hammond, Hambright, Brannon, Hawthorne and Chronicle, as to what should be done. It was at once determined that a messenger should be sent to communicate with the back-mountain men, to inform them with regard to Ferguson's movements and his place of encampment, and to make arrangements for the coöperation of the two forces. Colonel Edward Lacy, whose home was a few miles northwest of the present town of Chester, and who owned a large amount of the lands on which the town of Chester is built, was chosen as the messenger. It was a good choice. Lacy was recklessly brave, and although a rough man, still, a man of good address. He was a sterling Whig. It turned out that the two camps were, at that time, sixty miles apart; but Lacy never stopped a moment until, late at night, he reached the camp of Campbell. This was on the night of the 4th of October. Lacy was seized by the patrolling party, and, without ceremony, blindfolded. He asked to be taken, without delay, to the commander's quarters. He was at first regarded by all as a spy, and had he not been a true Whig, and shown it by every word and action, he would have paid the penalty in a few minutes.

That day, Campbell and his mountain men had reached Gilbert Town, and finding Ferguson had decamped, and learning

that he was gone to Ninety-Six, which had lately been repaired and reinforced, a council of war had been held but a short time before Lacy arrived, and it was concluded to abandon the chase. Lacy then informed them that Ferguson was in the neighborhood of Cherokee Ford—that he was not aiming to reach Ninety-Six; but his point of destination was Charlotte, North Carolina. They were urged to annul the previous resolution of the night, and meet the troops under Williams, Hill and other leaders, at a place called the Cowpens, on the 6th. This was done, and after Lacy had fed his horse, eaten a supper of what the partisan camp could afford, and enjoyed a few hours' sleep on the ground, he was up and away to join his command, which was now on its way to the Cowpens.

Let us leave the two armies and trace the movements of Colonel Ferguson. On the 4th of October—the day that Campbell and his men arrived at Gilbert Town—Ferguson had broken up his camp. The two deserters from Campbell's command had informed him of what was going on. He knew the men he had to deal with. He had met some of them before. Wisely, he concluded that his safety depended on getting out of their way. It would not be true to say that Col. Ferguson was frightened, for no braver man ever lived or fought or died on a battle-field; but he most assuredly felt that he was in a critical situation. Cornwallis had already perceived the danger with which Ferguson was surrounded, and had ordered him to join him at Charlotte. Ferguson now saw that it would require all his skill to reach that point. On breaking up his camp at Gilbert Town, he sent two Tories—Abe Collins and Peter Quinn—to Cornwallis at Charlotte, to inform that officer of his critical situation and to request aid. The messengers were hindered on the way by the presence of the Whigs in the neighborhood, and did not reach Charlotte until the 7th; consequently, the aid was not received. Ferguson, on leaving Gilbert Town, made the impression that he was going to Ninety-Six, and when Campbell and his party arrived at Gilbert Town, they were told that Ferguson was distant fifty or sixty miles. This was a feint. On the fourth of October, Ferguson camped at the Cowpens, about twenty miles from Gilbert Town. On the 5th, he crossed Broad River at Tate's Ferry, near where the Air-Line Railroad now crosses Broad River, and spent the night about a mile above the ferry. On the 6th, he pushed on up the ridge road between King's Creek and Buffalo Creek, until he came to the fork near Whitaker Station, on the Air-Line Railroad. There he took the right prong, leading across King's Creek, through a pass in the mountain, and on in the direction

of Yorkville. Here, a short distance after crossing King's Creek, on the right of the road, about two hundred and fifty yards from the pass in the mountain, on an eminence which he claimed, in honor of his majesty, to have called King's Mountain,\* and which still retains the name, he encamped, determined to remain until his reinforcements from Cornwallis would arrive.

From Gilbert Town to King's Mountain, he evidently was retreating. He felt that he had a terrible foe to deal with. He begged, he entreated the tories and loyalists to turn out and render him assistance. Finding that gentle measures accomplished nothing, he threatened to hang them if they did not shoulder their muskets and march against the rebels. His threats were as unavailing as his entreaties. On arriving at King's Mountain, he granted some of the royalists and tories permission to go into the surrounding country for the purpose of beating up recruits.

The inhabitants of the region surrounding King's Mountain, were, with a few exceptions, tories. These recruiting officers of Ferguson went to plundering their Whig neighbors. Instead of hunting up recruits for the King's army, they went to robbing the gardens and killing the hogs of the Whigs in the community. Here, strongly posted on King's Mountain, let us, for a short time, leave Col. Ferguson.

Before sunrise on the morning of the 6th of October, the forces under Colonel Campbell were ordered to march. The immediate point of destination was the Cowpens. The whole of the night previous had been spent in selecting from his entire force, which now numbered about three thousand, the best men, the best horses and the best guns. The number selected was nine hundred and ten. These were ordered to advance rapidly in pursuit of the foe, whilst the remainder were to follow leisurely. Before sundown, they reached the Cowpens. There they found Col. Hambricht and Major Chronicle, with sixty North Carolinians from Tryon county, and Col. James Williams with near two thousand South Carolinians. From these, nine hundred and thirty-three were selected to join the nine hundred and ten under Col. Campbell, in pursuit of Col. Ferguson.† Many of the officers were without commands, occupying simply the position of men in ranks. It was raining and dark, but all were enthusiastic. They had set out to find Ferguson, and find him they would. An hour was given the troops to rest, during which

\* Notwithstanding this declaration of Colonel Ferguson, it is probable that King's Mountain was so called from a man by the name of King, who lived in the neighborhood. From the same individual, it is probable that King's Creek derived its name.

† It is not very easy to determine, with any degree of certainty, the exact number of Americans actually engaged at the battle of King's Mountain. The Western army, that



time two beeves were killed; but the time was so short that some of the men did not get a mouthful prepared. There were several bands of tories in the neighborhood, whom they could have easily captured, but they were in search of Ferguson, and they let the tories alone, although it was known that these tories were to join Ferguson the next day. By eight o'clock every man was in the saddle and on the trail of Ferguson. It rained all night, and was dark. The guide got lost for a time. The men, in order to keep their guns dry, wrapped them up with their over-coats and blankets when they had them, and with their hunting shirts when these were wanting. On the morning of the 7th, just before sunrise, they reached Broad River, about a mile and a half below Cherokee Ford, expecting to find Ferguson on the east bank. They crossed the river and marched up its bank, and soon came to Ferguson's camp of the night of the 5th. Here a halt was made, and those who had anything to eat, eat it, and those who had nothing did without. The delay was only for a moment. Although hungry, wet and tired, they pushed on with as much zeal as if the search had just commenced. Ferguson's trail was fresh, and they knew that they would soon see who would do the hanging! For a distance of twelve miles, they saw no one but their own party, and learned nothing of Ferguson's whereabouts. When they had gone about twelve miles, after crossing Broad River, the advance party met some persons coming from Ferguson's camp. At the same time, a boy about fourteen years old, by the name of John Fonderin, was found in an old field. The boy said his brother was in Ferguson's camp. The story of the men and boy agreed, and from them it was learned that Ferguson's camp was only three miles distant. The location was accurately described by these men and young Fonderin, and the intentions of Ferguson learned. A dispatch, which he had sent to Cornwallis for aid, was afterward intercepted. From this his force was learned, and also what he thought about being able to defend himself. In that dispatch he boastingly, or rather profanely, we should say, declared that such was the nature of the place he had chosen for a camp, "that

---

is, that portion of the forces, commanded by Campbell, Shelby, Sevier and Cleveland, numbered, on the 5th of October, about three thousand. Of this number, nine hundred and ten, both Campbell and Shelby say, were selected to pursue Ferguson. The South Carolinians, which according to Col. Hill amounted to near two thousand, were made up of individuals who had joined the army in its march from Bigger's Ferry, in York county, to the Cowpens in Spartanburg county. Before King's Mountain was reached, a very large number of the men had fallen behind. Some of the companies had lost their way, and it is almost certain that not more than one thousand men were in the fight. In fact, one account puts the number at about seven hundred. This, we think, too small. It is a fact that the men were coming in during the whole of the fight. Countrymen having learned what was going on, mounted their horses, bare-backed, and some of them took their horses from the plow, and without taking time to lay off the harness, mounted and rushed to the scene of action, having no arms but their squirrel guns. The number of men selected for the enterprise was much greater than the number engaged in the battle, and many were in it, who had not been selected. They had come of their own accord and fought in true partisan style.

all the rebels out of hell could not drive him from it." This dispatch, with the exception of the statement of the number of Ferguson's force, was read aloud to the men. The officers held a consultation on horse-back, and concluded upon the mode of attack.

It was agreed that since Campbell had come the greatest distance, and had brought the largest number of men, that he should be the commander in chief. It was now past twelve o'clock. The rain had ceased, the clouds had passed away, and the sun was shining brightly. The pursuers of Ferguson had followed his trail from eight o'clock on the previous night, and now they were within four miles of his camp. The order was given "to tie up over-coats and blankets, throw priming out of pans, pick touch holes, prime anew, examine bullets, and see that everything is in readiness for battle." They were now within sight of the object for which some of them had been in search for nearly two weeks. They were fully aware of the kind of foe they had to encounter—a brave man and a cool officer. They had to face British regulars, who would rush upon them with bayonets; and Tories who knew it was victory or death. On they went, determined still to be free or die. They ascended an eminence on the western side of the mountain, and Ferguson's camp was in full view. They dismounted and tied their horses and prepared for the conflict. The mode of attack determined upon was to surround the mountain and pour in a deadly fire upon the enemy from all sides at the same time.

King's Mountain, upon which Col. Ferguson was encamped, is a spur of the Blue Ridge. It is a narrow, oval shaped knoll, having the direction of the Blue Ridge, and terminates abruptly at its northern extremity. It is covered with a kind of slate stone. The ridge, which is about one hundred and twenty feet above the ravines by which it is surrounded, and about a mile long, is not more than thirty yards wide, and the sides, especially on the north, are precipitous. It is situated in York county, South Carolina, about a mile and a half from the North Carolina line. Many of the men in Col. Williams' command were Whigs from the surrounding country. They had left their hiding places when, in the language of an old Revolutionary war song, "Old Williams came from Hillsborough, they flocked to him again." These men understood the nature of the ground accurately. They had hunted deer on the same place frequently. In view of this fact, the guides for the other troops were chosen from Williams' men.

When the exact location of Ferguson's camp was learned, the army of pursuers marched in four columns. Col. Campbell's

regiment, with part of Cleveland's regiment, commanded by Major Winston, formed the right centre ; Col. Shelby's regiment, the left centre. Col. Sevier's regiment composed the right wing ; and the troops under Col. Williams and the remainder of Col. Cleveland's regiment, commanded by himself, formed the left wing.

On arriving in full view of the enemy, and having tied their horses and leaving a small guard to watch them, the troops commanded by Shelby, Sevier, McDowell, Campbell and Winston, were ordered to file to the right and pass round the enemy's camp on the mountain. Those under Cleveland, Chronicle, Hambright and Williams, were to file to the left and pass round. Both parties were to continue their march, without firing, until they met. Then the enemy's camp would be completely surrounded. The order was then to face toward the enemy, raise the Indian war-whoop, and rush forward upon the foe.

It was near three o'clock on the afternoon of the 7th of October, 1780. The destiny of American liberty was in the hands of a few undisciplined militia. It never was in better hands than when it was entrusted to those brave men who fought and bled and died and won the victory over Col. Ferguson on King's Mountain. The order is given to march. On they go, with the steadiness of veterans. Every order is executed with as much promptness as if they had been trained regulars.

The British commenced to fire upon Shelby's men as the right wing passed round the mountain. McDowell returned the fire, and the action became general. The keen crack of the deadly Deckhard rifle, and the Indian war-whoop, heard all round the enemy's camp, announced that every man was in his place. Ferguson ordered his regulars to charge upon the right wing of the Whigs. This drove McDowell, Shelby and Campbell back ; but at this very moment Chronicle, Hambright, Cleveland and Williams had ascended the opposite extremity of the mountain and driven the British and Tories behind their wagons. Ferguson was here himself. His men were falling on all sides. He immediately sent for DePeyster, who had led the charge against McDowell, Shelby and Campbell. As DePeyster passed back along the ridge, the South Carolinians, under Williams, poured in a deadly fire upon him. His ranks were soon thinned and the regulars thrown into confusion. They, however, immediately rallied and made a dreadful push against Chronicle and Cleveland, driving them down the mountain. Here Chronicle was killed. The charge of the British upon the left of the Whigs was mistaken by the right under Shelby, McDowell and Campbell, for a retreat, and the shout was



raised, "Huzza, boys, they are retreating. Come on." On, on, the left wing of the Whigs, in solid phalanx, rushed upon the enemy. Ferguson was now forced to meet the right wing. The left wing, as the right wing before had done, mistook the charge of the British for a retreat, faced about and rushed upon, as they thought, the retreating foe. Thus each charge of the enemy was mistaken by the Whigs on the opposite side for a retreat. Ferguson galloped back and forth along his lines, encouraging his men with entreaties and with curses. In spite of all his skill and the desperate courage of his men, his ground was taken from him and he was forced to occupy a small portion of the ridge near the northern extremity. He ordered his cavalry to mount; but this move proved unavailing. The men were shot down as soon as they mounted. He prepared for a last and desperate charge. The Tories were ordered to sharpen the handles of their butcher knives and fasten them in the muzzles of their guns, and, with the British regulars, charge upon the rebels. This also was of no avail. The Whigs were all around them, and confusion was in the British camp. DePeyster hoisted a white flag. Ferguson pulled it down. DePeyster raised it at the other extremity of the British camp. Ferguson saw it and darted, at the full gallop, and, with his sword, cut it down, swearing that he would never surrender to militia. He had been wounded in the hand, but in this wounded hand he bore a silver whistle, whose shrill sound inspired courage in the already vanquished. A ball from some unknown rifle threw the hero from his charger, and DePeyster again hoisted a white flag.

The Tories and British ceased firing, but the Whigs, either not understanding the import of a white flag, or knowing that it had been hoisted twice before and was pulled down, continued to fire. The officers ordered their men to cease firing; but the blood of the Whigs was warm and fire they would. Col. Shelby then ordered the British to lay down their arms, and the men would understand this as a sign that they surrendered. This was done, and the British were ordered to leave their guns, most of which were loaded, and march to another place. The Whigs then marched up and took possession of the enemy's camp.

The victory was complete. Neither man nor horse escaped. The whole force of the British amounted to eleven hundred and twenty-five men, of which number eleven hundred and five fell into the hands of the Whigs. Twenty were out on a plundering expedition. Of the eleven hundred and five taken by the Whigs, five hundred and five were either dead or so badly wounded as not to be able to be moved. The Whig loss was twenty-eight killed

and sixty wounded. Everything pertaining to the camp of Ferguson fell into the hands of the Whigs. Besides his provisions and camp equipage, the Whigs got a number of splendid horses and fifteen hundred stand of arms and a supply of powder and bullets. When the patriots saw what they had achieved, they raised a shout which was heard for "seven miles on the plain."

The Whigs slept on the battle-field the night after the fight. The next morning the dead were hurriedly buried, the wounded Whigs cared for, the enemy's wagons burned, and the patriots departed. Lacy and Hill marched down into York county and encamped on Bullock's Creek. Campbell and the North Carolinians took the prisoners and hastened to get beyond the mountains. As they had more prisoners than men, and as it was important to save the captured guns, the flints were all removed and the prisoners made to carry them.

At Bickerstaff's old field, a court martial was held in order to decide what should be done with the tories. Thirty were condemned to be hanged; but all but nine of the most notorious were pardoned.

No victory ever was more complete than that of King's Mountain, and none was more timely for the interest of America. The British, tories and loyalists, in every section of the country, were panic stricken, and the Whigs encouraged. Cornwallis took fright and left Charlotte, abandoning his contemplated march into Virginia.

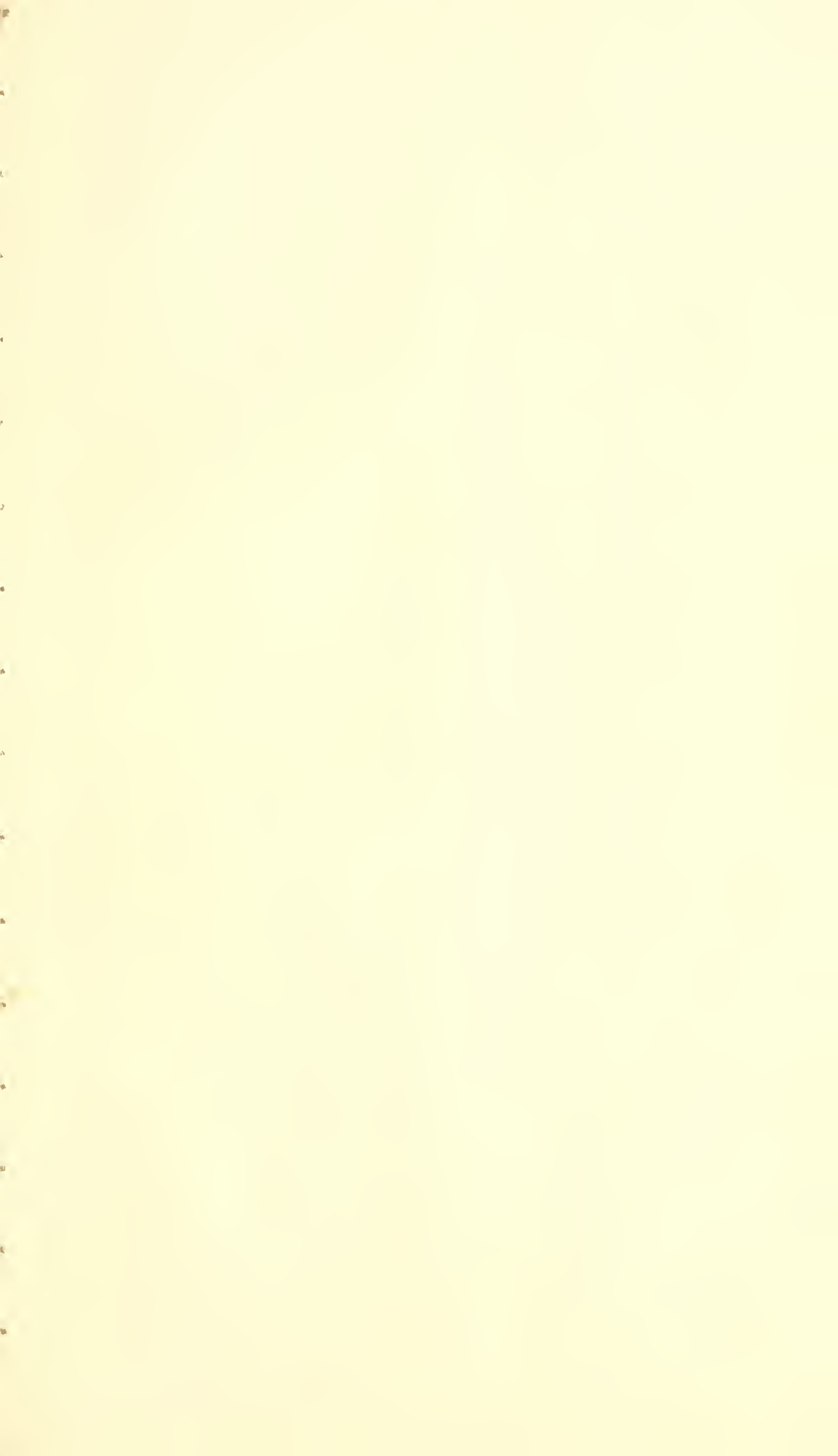
As a revolutionary relic worthy of preservation, we append the following rather rough piece of poetry, which was called "The Battle of King's Mountain." We suppose the author's name is unknown to any one. The third and fourth lines, and possibly more, are wanting. Rough as it is, it is still worthy of being preserved.

Old Williams from Hillsborough came;  
To him the South Carolinians flocked amain.

\* \* \* \* \*

We marched to the Cowpens; Campbell was there,  
Shelby, Cleveland and Colonel Sevier;  
Men of renown, sir, like lions so bold,  
Like lions undaunted ne'er to be controlled,  
We set out on our march that very same night;  
Sometimes we were wrong, sometimes we were right;  
Our hearts being ruo in true liberty's mould,  
We valued not hunger, wet weary nor cold.  
On the top of King's Mountain, the old rogue we found,  
And like brave heroes his camp did surround;  
Like lightning the flashes, like thunder the noise,  
Our rifles struck the poor tories with sudden surprise.  
Old Williams and twenty five more,  
When the battle was over, lay rolled in their gore,  
With sorrow their bodies were interred in the clay,  
Hoping to heaven their souls took their way.  
This being ended, we shouted amain,  
Our voices were heard seven miles on the plain;  
Liberty shall stand—the tories shall fall;  
Here is the end of my song, so God bless you all.

**R B 9.3.1**







LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 011 800 276 3

